THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS (SHRI SATYA BRATA MOOKHERJEE): (a) and (b) The Indian Pharmaceutical Companies like M/s. Ranbaxy and M/s Cipla have had negotiations with the Government of Nigeria for supply of three anti-retroviral drugs namely Lamivudine, Stavudine and Nevirapine to the Federal Ministry of Health, Nigeria. Based on the information received from M/s Cipla India, consignments for supply of anti-retroviral drugs namely Lamivudine, Stavudine and Nevirapine have been dispatched to Ministry of Health, Nigeria.

The Government at present provides financial support to States/Union Territories for the treatment of opportunistic infections in all public sector hospitals. But anti-retroviral therapies are not supported by the Government in the programme because of their prohibitive costs on account of indefinite period of treatment and other supportive investigations required for monitoring the progress of the disease. However, Government has been progressively reducing the excise and custom duties on anti-retroviral drugs to make them available to HIV/AIDS patients at reasonable price.

Vintage Allowance Scheme for urea units

†3362. SHRI RAJIV RANJAN SINGH 'LALAN':
SHRI RAM JETHMALANI:

Will the Minister of CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Vintage Allowance Scheme is in operation for urea manufacturing factories;

(b) if so, the broad outline of the scheme; and

(c) the details of benefits provided under this scheme to urea manufacturing units during the Seventh Pricing Period and how much?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS (SHRI SATYA BRATA MOOKHERJEE): (a) to (c) Vintage Allowance of 5 per cent each in the norms relating to capacity utilization and energy consumption has been allowed to urea units that have been in operation for more than 10 years. Vintage Allowance was introduced *w.e.f.* 1.4.1988 during the Vth Pricing Period and has been continued during the VIth Pricing Period which was valid up to 30.6.1997. Finalization of policy parameters/

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

norms including Vintage Allowance for VIIth Pricing Period, which will be effective from 1.7.1997, is under consideration of the Government.

Subsidy to fertilizer users

†3363. SHRI RAM JETHMALANI:
SHRI RAJIV RANJAN SINGH 'LALAN':

Will the Minister of CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government would consider any plan to provide subsidy on chemical fertilizers direct to the users, instead of providing the same to their manufacturers;

(b) if not, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether it is a fact that due to the present system of giving subsidy, the consumers are not getting its benefits; and

(d) if so, Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS (SHRI SATYA BRATA MOOKHERJEE): (a) and (b) There is no plan at present to provide subsidy on chemical fertilizers directly to the users because it is felt that it is administratively very difficult and cumbersome to provide subsidy directly to farmers.

(c) and (d) In order to make available fertilizers at affordable prices to farmers, the Government provides subsidy on urea and concession on decontrolled phosphatic and potassic fertilizers. Government fixes Maximum Retail Price (MRP) in case of urea, the only controlled fertilizer and indicates MRPs in case of decontrolled P&K fertilizers. The MRPs of Single Super Phosphate are indicated by respective State Governments. The fertilizers are sold at uniform MRP and indicative MRPs, as the case may be, to the farmers throughout the country, which are far less than the cost of production of fertilizers. The subsidy/concession is paid to fertilizer manufacturers which consequently benefits the farmers. Thus, the benefit is passed on to farmers in the form of uniform and subsidised MRPs.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.